

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. Will you oppose any effort to hold an initiative in the District that would take away the civil marriage rights now enjoyed by same-sex couples, and publicly campaign for marriage equality in the event such an initiative is held?

Yes. As I have previously stated, for years I pressed for the issuance of the draft opinion of the DC Attorney General on recognition on the validity in DC of same-sex marriages legally conducted elsewhere. My proudest moment as an openly gay person privileged to represent Ward 1 was when I had the honor of voting "yes" for marriage equality. The right for same-sex couples to marry is a fundamental human right. Under our laws, a ballot initiative that would authorize discrimination under the District's Human Rights Act is, quite simply, illegal. I have and will continue to oppose any radical effort to put our fundamental rights in peril.

2. If the District's civil marriage equality is taken away either directly by an act of Congress or by a ballot measure, will you support immediate re-passage of civil marriage equality?

Yes. Throughout my service as Councilmember for Ward 1, with oversight of our DC Water Authority and during my service on the Metro-WMATA Board, I have stood firmly for the principle of Home Rule. Despite the federal government's Constitutional role over the District's affairs, the federal government mostly stays out of our business. It is only when some member of Congress from any given Congressional outpost wants to garner political favor with his or her constituency that we run the risk of interference. I believe that for the majority of District residents the fact of marriage equality is a settled one. But until the residents of the District are fully enfranchised, we run the risk of Congressional interference. I will continue to fight against such interference.

3. Do you agree that private contractors doing business with the District should be required to provide equal benefits including health insurance to same-sex partners?

Yes. Earning tax-payer dollars for work done for the District is a privilege. Since the creation of domestic partnerships in 1992, I have worked hard to enhance and refine our domestic partnership laws. In fact, prior to our marriage equality victory we came close to affording domestic partners virtually the same rights and responsibilities enjoyed by married couples. I agree that, in addition to seeking out LGBTQ contractors, the District should require companies that earn tax-payer dollars to provide the equal benefits that we have worked so hard to preserve for our residents.

4. Will you oppose legislation containing either a "conscience clause" that would allow anyone to claim a Human Rights Act exemption at will, as was proposed by

Councilmember Yvette Alexander during consideration of the marriage equality bill last year; or a "business necessity" exemption that would allow taxpayer-funded charities run by religious groups to discriminate against married same-sex couples, as was proposed by the Archdiocese of Washington?

Yes. "Exceptions" to fundamental human rights are unconscionable. Any exception to these rights is a dilution to the very principle of fundamental rights and I have not and would not support it.

PUBLIC HEALTH

5. Do you support sufficient funding to ensure that the drive to make HIV testing routine among District residents includes counseling and treatment referrals for those testing positive?

Yes. Having served on the Whitman-Walker Clinic's Board of Directors since October 1979, and then for 15 years as its Executive Director, I experienced first hand the impact of this terrible disease on our community. As I've said before, the AIDS crisis of the 80s was the most difficult period that I've ever been through, and it pains me to see the resurgence of the epidemic in our city. I know that the only effective way to curb the spread of this terrible disease is through working with GLAA and others to improve education, regular testing and wrap-around services for those who test positive.

6. Are you committed to continuing and expanding the District's condom distribution program to include water-based lubricant and tracking of their distribution to specified locations?

Yes. We need to do everything we can to promote public health and responsible behavior. This includes expanding our condom distribution program and encouraging local businesses to take part in our effort to provide condoms and education on their use and effectiveness. This is certainly a program to which I am committed to continuing and expanding.

7. Will you support legislation giving the directors of the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants as other minority constituent offices have, that will be open to organizations serving the populations within the offices' purview?

Yes. I authored the law in 2005 which established the Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Affairs, and I am committed to fully empowering the work of that office. Competitive community grants are one of the most effective means of getting much needed services directly to our minority constituents. I have supported this approach in the past when I served as oversight Chairman of the

Office of Latino Affairs. OLA provides community-based grants, advocacy, community relations and outreach services to the District's Latino population. These programs provide almost 20,000 Latino residents. OLA grants are used both directly to provide services and as matching funds for federal or private grants. In fact, for FY11 when the Mayor proposed a drastic reduction to these funds I authored more than \$300,000 in my committee to restore the cuts. I have seen the immediate and lasting effects that community-based grants can have in our communities and support increased funding for similar programs at the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs.

8. Describe steps you will support to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including in HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services.

I fully support maintaining steadfast oversight of HAHSTA's programs and finances to ensure that we aggressively address the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB crisis. As GLAA has recently highlighted, DC Appleseed's August 2005 report, "HIV/AIDS in the Nation's Capital," helped launch a series of reforms led by the Committee on Health and the Council at the HAHSTA. As described in a Metro Weekly January 2007 article, when I served at Whitman Walker we transformed the clinic from "a small STD clinic in Adams Morgan into one of the nation's premier AIDS service providers." We were able to achieve this through careful programmatic and infrastructure investments and financial accountability.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE JUDICIARY

9. Will you support funding for mandatory lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sensitivity and diversity training for all members of the Metropolitan Police Department and the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department?

Yes. As Ward 1 Councilmember, I know first-hand in working with our Latino officers in the Ward about the effectiveness of community policing that includes sensitivity and diversity training. I need look no further than the recently released bulletin by MPD on the increase in hate/bias violence against members of the LGBTQ community serves as a sad reminder that members of our community are still being targeted by those who would perpetuate bigotry and hate. MPD and FEMS are our first line of defense against hate/bias crimes, and members of our public safety community must be equipped to respond to the unique needs and issues of our community. Every MPD officer and FEMS personnel needs this training.

10. Will you support a budget for the Office of Police Complaints large enough to avoid developing a backlog of cases?

Yes. While I do not serve on the Council's committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, I know that just as MPD is our first line of defense in the community, the Office of Police Complaints is our way of ensuring MPD's accountability to the community. As GLAA recently reported, under the leadership of Director Eure and the guidance of the Police Complaints Board and its Chair Kurt Vorndran, this office has been at the forefront of ensuring that MPD and its officers are accountable to the residents of the District of Columbia. Justice delayed is justice denied. Only with a strong budget can OPC continue its timely investigations into allegations of MPD violations such as harassment, unnecessary or excessive use of force, or discriminatory treatment.

11. Will you support efforts to rein in police officials who respond to legitimate crime concerns with unsustainable, media-centric quick fixes that infringe constitutionally protected civil liberties? And will you do so without waiting for courts to overturn them, as the U.S. Court of Appeals did to the Neighborhood Safety Zone initiative in 2009?

Yes. Broad stroke quick fixes, motivated by public fear and political expediency do not work. In response to community complaints, I authored a bill to give residents and neighbors some much-needed relief from criminal congregants. After much discussion, where residents raised concerns that my anti-loitering bill could provide an opportunity for police to unfairly target people on the basis of race or background, especially our young people, I withdrew the bill.

More recently, when MPD considered taking part in the federal "Secure Communities" policing program, I was one of the first to raise serious objections over this initiative and call upon the District to not participate in this program. This program would require that the records of individuals arrested, potentially even for such minor infractions as a traffic stop, be forwarded for review against F.B.I. and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) databases. The database reviews could result in deportation prior to the conviction for any crime or other potential constraints of civil liberties.

The harm that well intentioned but ill conceived programs such as Secure Communities can do is drastic and permanent and we must nip them in the bud before the damage is done.

12. Will you support maintaining the award-winning Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit with both a citywide scope and a dedicated and well-trained central core unit with a full-time sergeant?

Yes. I fully support all of our community policing efforts, and MPD's liaison units have been the hallmark of those efforts. In December 2009, when Chief Lanier expressed an interest in further eviscerating the Gay & Lesbian and the Latino Liaison Units, I stood with GLAA, GLOV and others in opposing the proposal until

a plan was put into place that addressed the myriad of concerns in the community about inadequate training, trans profiling, domestic violence, and (as I mentioned above) the resurgence of hate/bias crimes against our community. As GLAA has noted recently, we were never better served as when the GLLU had full support from MPD, a well-trained staff, and was run by Sergeant Brett Parson. I support a fully invigorated GLLU.

13. Will you press for increased oversight of the Metropolitan Police Department's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data?

Yes. Incomplete or misleading statistics on hate/bias crimes can only serve to imperil our efforts to address these crimes. I agree that the way in which MPD has, in the past, collected transgender-related hate/bias crime data only served to perpetuate the stereotype about crimes targeting transgendered persons as "sexual orientation" crimes, which they are not. Without complete information about the targets of these crimes, and the motivations behind them, MPD will be ill-equipped to address these crimes.

14. Do you support making the D.C. Attorney General an elected position?

Yes. On June 1, 2010, I joined all but one of my colleagues in emergency action authorizing a referendum for District residents to decide whether to establish the D.C. Attorney General as an elected position. As elected officials, we are directly accountable to the electorate. The people of the District should decide whether they and this Office will benefit from the independence and trust that results from the electoral process.

HUMAN RIGHTS

15. Will you support a budget for the Office of Human Rights large enough to allow it to keep the backlog at below 70 aged cases; keep below 210 days the average time it takes to issue a probable cause finding; and expand education, prevention, and language access efforts?

Yes. As author of the law which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or expression, I am keenly aware of the important role that the Office of Human Rights should play in protecting and preserving the fundamental human rights of LGBTQ people in the District. Furthermore, as author of the Language Access Act, I remain committed to ensuring that our government is accessible to all persons of limited English proficiency, especially our vulnerable populations.

As I mentioned above, justice delayed is justice denied, and I know first-hand the chilling effect that administrative backlogs can have on justice and accountability.

When I had oversight of this agency, I expanded the staff by 6 FTE specifically to address the backlog. At the time, I worked with then Director Charles Holman to cut the backlog in half and authored funds to contract with investigators, mediators and others. More recently, in my own Committee as a result of our oversight efforts with the ABC Board, we saw a dramatic reduction of its case backlog and the resulting improvements at ABC establishments. I am committed to working with the Chairperson of the Committee on Aging and Community Affairs, a Council Committee upon which I serve, to ensure that the Office of Human Rights continues to have similar support.

16. Will you block ceremonial resolutions and otherwise decline to honor individuals or organizations that promote any sort of bigotry?

Yes. The Council's ceremonial resolutions are our unique opportunity to honor District residents and others who have, in their own way, helped improve the lives of District residents and otherwise contributed to what makes the District a truly great city. It is truly a special honor. In the past, among the many ceremonial resolutions which I have honored are those for the African American Civil War Memorial, the AIDS Walk, the Dalai Lama, Justice Thurgood Marshall, plus a host of District residents who have honored us with their good works. I certainly would want to know details about the individual's record and the context of any statements or actions, but to allow organizations or individuals who promote any sort of bigotry to share in their spotlight would diminish the honor we have bestowed upon the most deserving in our community.

17. Are you committed to including a transgender representative on the D.C. Commission on Human Rights?

Yes. I would strongly support that initiative. Under our law, the Council of the District of Columbia must actively confirm a Mayoral nominee to serve on the Commission on Human Rights. Without our active approval, the Mayor's nominees are deemed disapproved. As such, the Council plays a critical role in vetting the Mayor's nominees. Whether it is because of employment discrimination, disparate access to health services, or unequal treatment by District businesses, transgendered individuals face unique challenges in the District. The community and the Commission would be well served by a strong Mayoral nomination, and swift Council approval, of a transgendered member to the Commission.

18. Do you agree that the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement?

Yes. I do, however, share GLAA's experience with the current Director of the Office of Human Rights, Mr. Gustavo Velasquez. During his tenure at OHR, as when he served as Director of the Office of Latino Affairs, Mr. Velasquez has proved to be a

creative, responsive and effective director, as is evidenced by the improvements at OHR. In fact, it was because of his record serving the historically underserved Latino population in the District that I voted "yes" on his nomination to serve as OHR Director, despite my own reservations about GLAA's exclusion from the selection process. But whether it is previous experience or on-the-job training, I do believe that a proper nominee to hold this office is one that is committed to, and drive to preserve and protect the fundamental human rights of all of the people the Human Rights Act is meant to protect.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND YOUTH

19. Will you oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

Yes. I generally oppose government vouchers for parochial schools as a matter of principle. Equally important, however, is that we send the message to young people that discrimination based on any of the protected classes in our strong Human Rights Act cannot be tolerated. Recent studies show that LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. Our tax dollars should not go to any institution that perpetuates an atmosphere of ignorance or intolerance.

20. Will you support improved services and treatment for gay and transgender homeless youth, including transitional housing?

Yes. Funding for housing and wrap around services for LGBTQ youth is critical. We've known for a long time that of the more than a million homeless youth across the nation up to 40 percent self-identify as gay or transgender.

21. Will you oppose the use of either federal or District taxpayer funds to promote "abstinence only until marriage" sex education that undermines safer-sex programs by excluding more comprehensive information?

Yes. We know that a great number of youth engaging in sexual activity. Recent studies show that almost 50% of high school student have reported engaging in some type of sexual activity. Many of these young people are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and sexual violence precisely because of the lack of information geared toward young people about sex. I have always supported "abstinence as a good option" education but sex education programs that only teach about abstinence until marriage or adulthood are irresponsible in the face of reality.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

22. Do you support the right of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it?

Yes. My record on this issue is clear as I was the author of the law to allow adult oriented bars displaced by the Nationals baseball stadium to relocate in the District, despite strict restrictions. It is through these efforts and the unwavering support from groups such as GLAA that one of the displaced clubs, Ziegfeld's/Secrets, was able to move its bar license and reopen its doors in early 2009.

23. Will you support legislation to curb abuses by NIMBYs who are now allowed to file an endless series of baseless complaints to harass or extort bars and restaurants?

Yes. One of my priorities in our oversight of the ABC Board and ABRA has been to reform the historically cumbersome license protest process. In the past, protests—legitimate or not—would languish for months before the Board rendered a decision in a contested case. As a result of our oversight, the ABC Board established clear written guidelines which significantly reduced the wait time. These included limits on time allotted for parties to present their case, and the establishment of a strict 60-day protest period. Together with additional Board meetings on days other than Wednesdays, which I also encouraged, the ABC Board's backlog was virtually eliminated, with just a handful of on-going cases in the queue at any given time.

Another of my concerns with the “voluntary agreement” process was the fact that new businesses, and those with good records, were disadvantaged by reduced operating hours as a condition of opening their doors. Through my strong encouragement, the ABC Board's written position is now that it generally is not in favor of including hours restrictions in voluntary agreements. I have asked for a comprehensive review of the ABC Board's voluntary agreement process to further streamline its guidelines regarding what can and cannot be included in a voluntary agreement.

As both the Ward 1 Councilmember and Chairperson of the Council's committee with oversight of ABRA and the ABC Board, I know how complex the relationship between bars and restaurants and neighborhoods can be. I need look no further than the neighborhoods I represent, such as the U Street Corridor, Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant to see how these relationships can thrive, and how they can fail. We need a forum for residents to air their concerns with bars and restaurants that operate as “bad apples” in a given community. Legitimate businesses, however, should not suffer because of those few businesses that act without regard to the neighborhoods.

I am interested in the legislative approach proposed by GLAA and I believe it merits further examination, but in the meantime I will continue to work with the ABC Board and ABRA to make it easier for good businesses to thrive in our neighborhoods.

24. What are your thoughts regarding GLAA's proposal, explained in Agenda: 2010, to mitigate the problems associated with prostitution by legalizing and regulating it? What will you do to provide alternatives to survival sex for at-risk populations like homeless youth and transgenders?

I agree with GLAA's underlying premise that the Council should not be in the business of legislating morality, and I also agree that our laws fail to address the issues of persons who, by necessity or hardship, are driven to prostitution. To my mind, it is not altogether clear that the legalization of prostitution is the answer. Even in places such as Nevada and the Netherlands, where prostitution is legal and regulated, there are underlying concerns about the rights and condition of sex workers. Advocates in Nevada have long complained about power disparities between brothel operators and workers. The Netherlands has one of the highest rates of human trafficking in the world. Survival sex demoralizes the human spirit whether or not it is engaged in legally. I agree, however, that a focus on expanding services and educating about options, rather than prosecution and imprisonment, is the tried and true way of helping at-risk populations. I have and will continue to support those efforts.